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FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISHU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0876

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOGADISHU 10384

DEPT FOR INR/B, INR/DB

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: [PINR SO](#)

SUBJECT: LEADER OF SOMALI DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT EXPLAINS
HIMSELF

REF: MOGADISHU 10239

11. CONFIDENTIAL--ENTIRE TEXT.

12. SUMMARY: THE ELDERLY RAHENWEYNE LEADER WHO HEADS THE SOMALI DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (SDM) SAID HE HAD BROKEN A PROMISE WITH SIAD BARRE AND ENTERED THE POLITICAL FRAY BECAUSE THE CURRENT REGIME IS EXPIRING AND HE DID NOT WANT HIS TRIBE TO MISS OUT IN THE COMPETITION FOR POLITICAL POWER. HE EXPECTED TO ATTEND THE CAIRO CONFERENCE AS A MEMBER OF THE MANIFESTO GROUP'S DELEGATION. HE WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT HIS COUNTRY'S FUTURE AND ANXIOUS FOR MORE AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT. END SUMMARY.

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13. BIOGRAPHICS: ABDULCADIR MOHAMED ADEN (RAHENWEYNE) WAS BORN ABOUT 70 YEARS AGO IN BOULA BERTÉ, WHERE HIS FATHER WAS A COLONIAL POLICEMAN. A MEMBER OF THE RAHENWEYNE TRIBE, HE GREW UP IN MOGADISHU AFTER HIS FATHER'S TRANSFER TO THE CAPITAL. HE BECAME KNOWN AS ZOPPO, OR GIMP, DUE TO A PARTIALLY CRIPPLED LEG. THE YOUNG SOMALIS' ASPIRATIONS TO STUDY ABROAD WERE FRUSTRATED BY THE FASCIST REGIME.

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14. ZOPPO ENTERED POLITICS DURING THE BRITISH OCCUPATION AND BECAME PROMINENT DURING THE SUBSEQUENT ITALIAN TRUSTEESHIP. CONSIDERED BY THEM A LEADER OF HIS TRIBE, ZOPPO WAS NAMED MINISTER OF FINANCE BY THE FIRST INDEPENDENT GOVERNMENT, SHIFTING TO THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR IN 1964. HE LEFT THAT POSITION THREE YEARS LATER. ZOPPO CLAIMED, AT A MEETING WITH ME NOVEMBER 28, TO HAVE HELPED FINANCE SIAD BARRE'S COUP IN 1969. IN ANY CASE, HE WAS NOT LOCKED UP THEREAFTER, THE FATE OF MANY OTHER PROMINENT POLITICIANS. HE SAID THAT HE AND THE NEW PRESIDENT STRUCK A BARGAIN. SIAD PROMISED ZOPPO HE WOULD NOT BE ARRESTED, PROVIDED HE AND THE RAHENWEYNE WHO FOLLOWED HIS LEADERSHIP REFRAINED FROM OPPOSITION OR OTHER FORMS OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY.

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15. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A FEW YEARS SPENT IN KENYA, WHEN ZOPPO WAS FEARFUL THAT SIAD'S ADOPTION OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM BODED ILL FOR A PROMINENT AND SUCCESSFUL CAPITALIST, HE HAS CONTINUED TO RESIDE IN MOGADISHU. ACCORDING TO THE RAHENWEYNE ELDER, WHEN SIAD DECIDED TO SEEK A REAPPROACHMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES, THE PRESIDENT COMMISSIONED HIM TO OPEN CHANNELS TO WASHINGTON. HE CLAIMED TO HAVE DONE SO THROUGH ITALIAN CONNECTIONS AND TO HAVE BEEN RECEIVED AT THE CARTER WHITE HOUSE. HIS CURRENT BUSINESS INTERESTS INCLUDE A BANANA PLANTATION NEAR SHALANBOD, REAL ESTATE IN MOGADISHU, AND REPRESENTATION OF OVERSEAS FIRMS. ZOPPO IS CONSIDERED BY MANY TO BE THE MOST INFLUENTIAL POLITICAL FIGURE IN SOUTHERN SOMALIA. ZOPPO HAS FIVE GROWN CHILDREN, ONE OF WHOM IS STUDYING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA. ZOPPO HAS A CATARACT ON ONE EYE, WHICH HE PLANS TO HAVE REMOVED IN THE UNITED STATES AFTER HIS UPCOMING TRIP TO EUROPE.

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¶6. THE SOMALI DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT: WHILE DECRYING TRIBALISM AS SOMALIA'S CURSE, ZOPPO READILY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE POLITICAL PARTY HE LEADS REPRESENTS ONLY HIS FELLOW RAHENWEYNE TRIBESMEN. ASKED WHY HE HAD VIOLATED HIS PACT WITH SIAD TO ENGAGE AGAIN IN POLITICS, HE REPLIED THAT WITH THE REGIME NEARING ITS/ND AND THE OTHER TRIBAL GROUPS ORGANIZING TO FURTHER THEIR OWN INTERESTS, HE DID NOT WANT RAHENWEYNE LEFT OUT OF THE COMPETITION FOR POWER. DISCLAIMING ANY PERSONAL AMBITION, HE SAID HE IS TOO OLD AND INFIRM TO SEEK THE PRESIDENCY, AN OFFICE WHICH MIGHT, HOWEVER, BE OCCUPIED BY ONE OF HIS KINSMEN. HE SAID HE CONSIDERED THE HAWIYE-BASED UNITED SOMALI CONGRESS A NATURAL ALLY, MENTIONING THAT HE HAD MET WITH ITS MOGADISHU LEADERSHIP THE PREVIOUS EVENING AT THE HOME OF MOHAMED FARAH SIAD.

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¶7. THE CAIRO CONFERENCE: THE RAHENWEYNE LEADER SAID THAT IN MEETINGS WITH THE MANIFESTO GROUP AND ITALIAN AMBASSADOR SICA IT WAS AGREED THAT ZOPPO WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE CAIRO ROUNDTABLE AS A MEMBER OF THE MANIFESTO GROUP'S DELEGATION. THIS TACTIC IS BEING ADOPTED TO HELP THE ITALIANS DEFLECT ATTEMPTS BY OTHER LESS REPRESENTATIVE GROUPS TO OBTAIN INVITATIONS TO THE MEETING. SICA SUPPOSEDLY AGREED THAT THE SDM WILL BE INVITED TO ANY SUBSEQUENT ROUNDTABLE MEETINGS IN ITS OWN NAME. ZOPPO PLANS TO VISIT LONDON EN ROUTE TO CAIRO, IN ORDER TO URGE THE SNM TO ATTEND THE FIRST ROUNDTABLE, IF THE NORTHERN DISSIDENTS HAVE NOT YET ACCEPTED THEIR INVITATION TO THE EGYPTIAN CAPITAL.

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¶8. MOHAMED SIAD BARRE: STATING THAT HE HAD KNOWN THE PRESIDENT FOR SOME 45 YEARS, ZOPPO SAID THAT SIAD HAS BECOME VERY ERRATIC SINCE HIS 1986 AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT. THE RAHENWEYNE LEADER EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT THE PRESIDENT'S MOOD SHIFTS ARE SIDE EFFECTS PRODUCED BY DRUGS HE HAS TAKEN SINCE THE ACCIDENT. HE ASSERTED THEY ARE NOT SIMPLY THE CONSEQUENCE OF ADVANCING AGE OR OF THE ONSET OF SENILITY. ZOPPO SAID SIAD AND HIS FAMILY ARE NOT AT ALL INTERESTED IN REFORM. THE SOLE EXCEPTION IS ABDIRAHMAN JAMA BARRE, WHO TOLD THE FAMILY AFTER RETURNING FROM THIS YEAR'S IMF/IBRD MEETINGS AND SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS IN ROME THAT THE REGIME HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ACCEPT POLITICAL REFORM.

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¶9. PROSPECTS: GIVEN THE TENACITY OF TRIBALISM IN SOMALI POLITICS, AND THE FAILURE OF SIAD'S OPPONENTS TO AGREE ON A STRATEGY FOR COOPERATION IN A POST-SIAD SOMALIA, THE ELDER STATESMAN SAID HE FEARED FOR THE FUTURE. HE WAS PARTICULARLY UPSET WITH THE SNM, WHICH HE ACCUSED OF TOTALLY IMPRACTICAL SECESSIONIST AMBITIONS. HIS MESSAGE TO ME WAS A PLEA FOR GREATER AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN SOMALIA'S ACCELERATING QITICAL EVOLUTION.

BISHOP